

**SPECIAL MEETING
BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
(PUBLIC PARTICIPATION)**

June 4, 2002

7:00 PM

Mayor Baines called the meeting to order.

Mayor Baines called for the Pledge of Allegiance; this function led by Alderman Pinard.

A moment of silent prayer was observed.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Wihby, Gatsas, Guinta (late), Sysyn, Osborne, Pinard, O'Neil,
Lopez, Shea, DeVries (late), Garrity, Smith, Thibault and Forest

Mayor Baines advised that the purpose of the special meeting is to give residents of Manchester the opportunity to address the Board on items of concern affecting the community; that each person will be given only one opportunity to speak; that comments shall be limited to two minutes to allow all participants the opportunity to speak and any comments must be directed to the Chair.

Mayor Baines requested that any resident wishing to speak come forward to the nearest microphone, clearly state their name and address when recognized, and give their comments.

Harold Levine, 49 Hillcroft Road, Manchester stated:

Mr. Mayor and Aldermen of the Board, as usual the taxpayers of Manchester are taking the hit on the chin again. Remember we as taxpayers elect you. You just think of yourselves and the union that runs the City of Manchester. I found out, and this figure is approximate from City Hall, that the Aldermanic Board on the insurance plan that the City has for City workers is costing the taxpayers approximately \$68,000 a year at the present time before the medical insurance goes up. Then you have the School Board on top of that. This has not been eliminated from the approved budget. They mentioned two weeks ago about ways to save money for the taxpayers. I will just mention that a committee should be set-up with the citizens of Manchester being on it along with people from the City. One, I believe a motor pool committee should be set-up. I also believe in privatizing departments like the City Solicitor's Department, which is a small department, and they are going to receive, according to what I saw in the budget, a little over \$1 million a year. I don't know how they can spend that kind of money for a small department. Also, it is about time the Highway Department got a committee together and I spoke to Frank Thomas a couple of weeks ago about it to stop giving services to private companies who run these big apartment houses throughout the City. They should have their own dumpsters. It is about time that the taxpayers of Manchester stop subsidizing their businesses. I believe that in order to straighten a lot of these things out, especially to get the School Department in line with us on duplication of

services, we probably should hold another Charter Revision Committee and that should be another thing on the Aldermanic Board immediately.

Mayor Baines replied we already voted for that and it will be on the ballot this fall.

Don Stremsky, 187 Poplar Street, Manchester stated:

I want to discuss the budget and the budgetary process. I believe that the Aldermen have to consider very carefully the short and long-term impact of tax increases of the magnitude being discussed. The impact on the elderly. The fact that over a period of time I feel that the middle income population is going to be moving out and other middle income families are not going to want to come in with high taxes. Businesses are not going to want to move here or expand here. I noted that yesterday the school committeewoman discussed the warehouse costing \$25,000 to lease a year and a warehouse manager even working part-time costing at least another \$25,000 and that this was known for two or three years. I feel that something should have been done about it then as it cost \$50,000 a year. I know that my property taxes spiked up due to the revaluation this past year. I believe that any increase in the magnitude of 10% is unconscionable and unnecessary. I work with a person who is an Alderman in another city in New Hampshire and I mentioned before about a 10% increase and he indicated to me that he thought it was much too high and he has never seen that kind of an increase in the city that he lives in. I just want to thank you for the opportunity to comment before this Board.

Donna Parker, Bedford stated:

I am not a Manchester resident but recently held an event in Manchester.

Mayor Baines replied and it rained on you.

Ms. Parker responded it snowed. I have some things for the Aldermen that I would like to hand out. I am here with a volunteer, Irene Gagne, who worked on the committee but basically we are here to thank the Aldermen and Mayor. A couple of months ago we came to talk to you regarding the ordinance that would have prohibited us from running the event for 18 hours and that was amended and we thank you for that. It was an awesome event. We made over \$110,000. We had over 75 survivors participate in the event and we lit 1,200 luminaries in memory and in honor of our Cancer survivors and Cancer patients.

Unfortunately the weather did not hold out but we did have people who stayed right through until 12 PM and some of you did come and visit the event so we want to again thank you for allowing us to run this event and we are just hoping for sunshine next year.

Mayor Baines stated at least not snow, right. Again, thank you very much for your effort. It was fantastic.

Ms. Parker stated we have some T-shirts as gifts to the Aldermen also.

Gail Barry, 51 W. Elmwood Avenue, Manchester stated:

I am Chairman of the Concerned Taxpayers of Manchester. First of all I would like to thank Mike Garrity, Dave Wihby, Ted Gatsas, Mary Sysyn, and Bill Shea for voting with the taxpayers in mind. We have listened to past Boards tote the phrase “this will revitalize our downtown in relation to the Hampshire Plaza and the Center of New Hampshire along with their parking garages and the civic arena.” None of these projects were going to cost us, the taxpayers, any money. Yet the latest is that the arena is costing Manchester taxpayers tens of thousands in police overtime, added cost to the Highway Department, not to mention the millions in rooms and meals tax money that could be better used for infrastructure instead of arena bond reduction. Coincidentally this 8% increase comes within one year of the arena opening. Could this 8% increase possibly have anything to do with the police overtime and other increased expenses from the arena that was not going to cost us any money? We are now in the process of school building repair and additions that would not be needed if it were not for tuition students. We have been lied to being told that tuition students bring in revenue when the cost and the revenue are, in fact, a wash. The school budget could easily be cut by several percentage points if we did not have these students. Our City is dear to us and it is sad to say that our Mayor and a majority of the Board of Aldermen are not. We will do our very best when the Concerned Taxpayers of Manchester endorse candidates for elective municipal offices in the fall of 2003 to remember those of you who have helped the taxpayers and those of you who did not. Thank you.

William Dugan, 111 Wheelock Street, Manchester stated:

Last month I appeared before this Board a couple of times opposing the Mayor’s budget based upon his proposal for \$121 million on school spending. I instead urged this Board to consider the \$128 million offered by or proposed by the School Committee. I have been watching the Finance Committee hearings and the other night the Mayor explained the difference between \$128 million and \$121 million and \$117 million. The Mayor gets it. He explained that the difference between \$121 million and \$128 million is a number of programs that communities across the country have. I am wondering of course when my daughter and the other students in Manchester will have those same types of programs. I do applaud the Mayor on his amended budget of \$124 million and I would urge that you pass that for school spending. Watching the Finance Committee hearings I have also noticed that indeed some of the Aldermen do recognize the problems associated with the School and some are interested in addressing those. I also agree with Alderman Shea that the School Committee may indeed wish to revise their thoughts on the health curriculum. I believe that reading and math programs may better enhance the performance of students in the third and sixth grades on exams. However, for those arguing against the \$121 million for school spending I think this is irresponsible. I don’t advocate taxing people out of their homes, but these anguished pleas for taxpayers not being able to afford these I think is a matter of priorities. I think we need to reassess our priorities as a community and as individuals and forget the gadgets, the bells, and the whistles and focus on quality education in this City.

Dick Charpentier, 99 Kidder Street, Manchester stated:

I just thought I would give you a chance to take your attention away from the budget for a couple of minutes. My concern is a safe and friendly and clean downtown. My brother-in-law and I along with Sylvio Dupuis and his brother-in-law walk downtown almost every day. I am here to ask for some consideration in additional enforcement of the rules of the road. We take our lives in our hands every morning as we maneuver through the right turns on red when the walk sign is on. You have to hesitate slightly before you step out because there is always right turn on red and people who are attempting to make the red light. There is no enforcement of any kind. I don't see any signs. I don't see any police. I am not sure what I would expect but somehow we need to pay some attention to this if we are going to have a friendly downtown. Were you also aware that there isn't a crosswalk between Auburn and Cheney Place? I don't know how one legally crosses the street between Auburn Street and Cheney Place. There is no place to cross the street. The most dangerous one is Valley and Elm. If you are on Elm Street walking in the Valley area and you wish to cross the street to go to St. Mary's Bank or to Dunkin Donuts, there is no crosswalk. There is no walk sign. Also, a minor item is parking on the sidewalk on South Elm Street. The only other thing is cleanliness. The block across from the Sunbeam Mall needs some pick up so maybe somebody in the City could pay attention to that. Thanks.

Joe Levasseur, 866 Elm Street, Manchester stated:

Relax Mayor I am not here to yell and scream tonight. I am actually here to say that I am very heartened by the fact that you guys did not take any money out of the rainy day fund. I thought it was a very good decision. I also want to say, Mayor, that while sitting down you took a big stand and said that you would take the political heat for your budget and I think you deserve credit for that statement because you will be taking the political heat for it down the road but at least you made your stand and I appreciate that a lot as a taxpayer because I do know that you were elected to help the schools and that is what you have done. So, anybody out there who is a taxpayer and a voter, Bob Baines was elected to do what he can for the schools and that is what he has done so that is what you have to live with. If you don't like it, you have a democratic process and you can vote him out of office and vote for somebody else. In the meantime I want to thank this Board. I know a lot of you worked hard and I know what it is like to sit in that chair and to take the vote that you took. I am here to say thank you to the Aldermen, Mr. Wihby, Mr. Gatsas, Mr. Guinta, Alderman Sysyn, Alderman Shea and Alderman Garrity for your stand in trying to cut the budget for the taxpayers. I personally want to say thank you for that. I would just also like to ask that you really do not sell that parking garage at Canal Street. I think it is not the right thing to do. I think if you are going to sell one you have to sell them all. You can't just pick and choose and I think it is going to affect a lot of people in that area. That is just a personal thing from a downtown business owner. I just don't think it is the right idea for Manchester and I really hope you guys do not sell that parking garage. We control the price as the Aldermen do and the Mayor and it is an economic part of our tool kit for downtown. It helps

businesses because we can control what the prices are going to be. If it is sold to private developers, they have the right to mark the price up as much as they want. Parking downtown is a monopoly and they will control that parking and they will be able to charge the price they want because as we know there is not an abundance of parking around. I hope that you guys will consider that very carefully when you make that decision. I don't know if it is on the agenda tonight but I know that it was voted on in another committee. I just would like to say thank you all. It was a very entertaining budget process. Have a good night.

Kathy Staubin, 374 Laurel Street, Manchester stated:

I would like to address the budget. I think...I am don't have anything particular prepared tonight but one thing that concerns me is the arbitrary number that comes off of the bottom line. Our School District delivers an education to our children for over \$1,000 less than the State average. To me that is a pretty good track record. I would like to see more spent because what we have been funding is just the essentials – the teacher, the student, the classroom, light, heat and a few supplies. What is lacking is that next level of support, which includes textbooks, library books, staff development, computers, all of those things that our teachers can use to help them do their jobs. Our teachers are like firemen without hoses. They are on the scene, they know exactly what to do but without the right equipment they can't do their job. What I think we need to do is think about that second level of support. The final thing that I would like to say is that I don't think that the week before the budget needs to be signed is the time to think about where we can save money in our municipal spending. Our municipal spending is slightly higher than other communities that I have looked at and if there are ways to save money, great, but you need to be thinking about that all year and not just the week before the budget needs to be signed. If you look at the Police Department and say well the Police Department is delivering services at a price that is equal to or below other communities of a similar size with similar demographics, then you don't touch their budget. If you look at another City department and their budget seems to be higher then you look at how other communities have saved money and I think it is a year long process that needs to happen because we need those municipal services. If you just cut the budget out now the way that the system runs is that you are going to start losing necessary services. Thank you.

There being no one else present wishing to speak, on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Lopez, it was voted to take all comments under advisement and further to receive and file any written documentation presented.

This being a special meeting of the Board, no further business was presented and on motion of Alderman Garrity, duly seconded by Alderman Lopez, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

City Clerk